

PROFESIONALIZACIJA SLOVENSKE VOJSKE – CILJ ALI POT

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE SLOVENIAN ARMED FORCES – A GOAL OR A PATH

Kdor išče cilj, bo ostal prazen, ko ga bo našel,
kdor pa najde pot, bo cilj vedno nosil v sebi.

Those who look for a goal will remain empty once they find it,
but those who find a path will carry the goal inside themselves forever.

Nejc Zaplotnik, Pot

Povzetek Projekt »Prehod na poklicno vojsko, dopolnjeno s prostovoljno rezervo«, s kratico PROVOJ, je bil začel leta 2003 in predčasno končan leta 2007. Ali je bila naloga profesionalizacije SV torej že opravljena? Ocenjujemo, da proces profesionalizacije SV še zdaleč ni končan. Pot od poklicne proti zares profesionalni SV nikakor ne bo kratka in lahka, prej dolgotrajna, zavita, strma in spolzka ter polna pasti in izzivov. V prispevku namenjamo posebno pozornost pravilnemu dojemu temeljnega poslanstva SV, premagovanju zapuščine obvezniške vojske, razumevanju omejitev poklicne vojske, profesionalizaciji v pogojih finančnih omejitev, profesionalni integriteti pripadnikov SV, profesionalizaciji in obvladovanju interesnih nasprotij, zunanjemu in notranjemu nadzoru vojaške profesije, profesionalizaciji prek stalnega izobraževanja ter profesionalizaciji kot nikoli zares končanem procesu. V tem kontekstu moramo na področju profesionalizacije poklicne SV ohraniti ustrezno čuječnost in zavzetost, preden se na nekatere nedoslednosti in nepravilnosti, na katere opozarja prispevek, dokončno navadimo oziroma ohranimo nadzor nad nekaterimi do zdaj manj uspešnimi vidiki tega procesa in njihovimi posledicami.

Ključne besede *Poklicna vojska, obvezniška vojska, profesionalizacija, PROVOJ, profesionalna integriteta, interesna nasprotja, nadzor vojaške profesije.*

Abstract The project »Transition to Professional Armed Forces Complemented with Contractual Reserve« (PROVOJ) was launched in 2003 and concluded prematurely in 2007. Has thus the mission of Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) professionalization been completed? We estimate that SAF professionalization is far from being complete. The path from career to truly professional Slovenian Armed Forces will certainly not be short and easy, but rather time consuming, winding, steep, slippery and full of traps and challenges. In the article, special attention is devoted to a proper understanding of the basic SAF mission, the overcoming of the conscription system heritage, understanding of professional armed forces restrictions, professionalization in austerity, professional integrity of SAF members, professionalization and management of conflicts of interests, internal and external control of the profession of arms, professionalization through continuous training and professionalization as a never-really-completed process. In this context, a proper amount of vigilance and commitment should be preserved in the professionalization of career armed forces, before we completely adapt to certain inconsistencies and irregularities underscored in this article and not to preserve the same level of control over some hitherto less successful aspects of this process and their consequences.

Key words *Professional armed forces, conscription armed forces, professionalization, PROVOJ, professional integrity, conflicts of interest, control of the profession of arms.*

Introduction Since 2000, the Republic of Slovenia has faced serious problems in the organization of obligatory military service which gave rise to deliberations on transition from the conscript to a professional armed force. In this context, the project Transition to Professional Armed Forces Complemented with Contractual Reserve (PROVOJ) was launched in 2003.

The project was divided into several sub-projects, some of which especially successfully appeased the consequences of a relatively fast transition from the conscript to a professional armed force. After five years, it was established that the project had achieved its purpose and the professionalization process was completed. The decision was based on the conviction that a career armed force is already professional and that professionalization is a goal, and not a path or process without a clearly identifiable goal.

Has thus the mission of Slovenian Armed Forces' (SAF) professionalization been completed, or would it be reasonable to be less self-sufficient and try to accomplish anything else in the field of the professionalization of the career SAF?

1 PROFESSIONALISATION OF (NON-)COMMISSIONED OFFICERS OR THE ENTIRE ARMED FORCE?

Until recently, it has been generally believed that the relationship between occupations and professions is dichotomous, both being characterized by opposing traits. Svetlik (1999) argues, however, that the two phenomena may not be as

exclusive as they appear at first sight and suggests that the analysis of occupations and professions should be based on continuity. On the one side of continuity there are weakly expressed occupations, and on the other side there are ideal-type professions involving all of the implied traits. In this context, professionalization is regarded as a process where specific occupations gradually gain the increasing number of profession traits.

Professionalism is hence the desired ideal-type end state of professional development against the described continuity, while professionalization is a never-ended process or path leading towards this goal. The SAF professionalization process remains, therefore, unfinished, particularly in the context of differentiation among individual categories of military personnel – officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers. Officers as being one of the classic professions, beside priests, medical doctors and judges, are undoubtedly the most professionalised part of modern military organizations, where professionalization is no longer limited exclusively to this category of military personnel.

Table 1:
Characteristics
of occupations
and professions

OCCUPATIONS	PROFESSIONS
Marginally placed in division of work within society	Centrally placed in division of work within society
Members are disorganized	Members have an organization of their own
Possess lower qualifications and receive short-term training	Possess high qualifications and receive long-term training
Experience-based activity	Activity is based on a systematic theory
Consumer-based selection and evaluation of their products and services	Clients accept their expertise and service as unquestionable
Market-regulated position	State-regulated position
Activity is based on technical instructions	Activity is based on code of professional ethics
Possess no specific occupational culture	Develop specific professional culture
Free entry into occupational activity	Control mechanism for professional entry
Low autonomy	High autonomy
Poor identification with occupation	Strong identification with profession

Source: Svetlik, 1999.

In order to reduce differences in the officer – non-commissioned officer relationship, and even more in the officer - soldier relationship, it is not only admissible, but more and more necessary to gradually expand the professionalization concept from the officer corps across the entire military organization of developed industrial societies. This is also clearly evident in the following table, where it can be estimated that

not only non-commissioned officers but soldiers as well are increasingly exhibiting professional qualities.

It might have been true once that soldiers without (non-)commissioned officer ranks are placed marginally in the societal division of work, are not specifically organized beyond their working environment, possess low qualifications, undergo short-term training, share no particular occupational culture, function without regard to the code of professional ethics and lack identification with their occupation, which is definitely no longer the case nowadays. Shifts are evident, but the path from a career to a genuinely full professional SAF will certainly not be short and easy, but rather time consuming, winding, steep, slippery and full of traps and challenges. Some of the major or more interesting ones will be explored in the continuation of the article.

2 CHALLENGE NO. 1 – APPROPRIATE PERCEPTION OF THE SAF'S BASIC MISSION

Viewed as a whole, the career SAF lacks sufficient combat orientation as a military organization¹, which should be primarily directed towards the development of warfare power and combat ethos, where its stabilisation and humanitarian potential should be developed in parallel, although it is anything but that. In the long run, this may have an adverse impact on the self-image of the SAF and its members as well as the defence capacity of the state. Attention should also be given to individual occurrences of marginalisation and negative selection of career members with a distinct combat orientation or even their self-exclusion from the military organizations² because of their frustration with an almost two-decade-long exclusion of SAF structures from real combat operations. The basic mission of any military is namely to provide realistic military force which, when other national power instruments fail to produce anticipated results, can protect, enforce and defend national interests.

Slovenian politics and public should be aware that the long-lasting obstacles in the evaluation of the training and readiness level of the professional armed force under realistic combat conditions prevent its normal development and impair its institutional integrity. Thus we are exposed to criticism that the Republic of Slovenia does not equally accept the sharing of burdens and risks in providing peace, security and stability within the international community, and hence increase the possibility of SAF's inefficient provision of national or collective defence.

¹ *Although this can no longer apply to individual SAF units trained in accordance with combat training instructions and manual, and undergoing the full operational capability system as well as appropriate verification process, we are still far away from the point when this will become common for the entire active component of the SAF, let alone for the members of contract reserve.*

² *Termination of employment relationship in the SAF which results from employment in private security and military enterprises performing tasks in global crisis areas is still a rare case. It can with potential concentration in individual military units nevertheless severely disturb their stability and development uniformity.*

3 CHALLENGE NO. 2 – ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF THE CONSCRIPT ARMY

The career SAF has evolved through a relatively short and soft transformation process from the conscript army, which is the reason for only partial abandonment of the legacy of the former organizational format.

Self-restraint of the Slovenian politics and public regarding the use of professional armed force in high-risk international operations and missions is well-marked. Slovenian public in particular behaves as if the Republic of Slovenia has not undergone transition from the conscript military that is understandably highly sensitive about any victims, to a totally different format of a career army. As the entry into a professional armed force is voluntary, the character of which is expeditionary rather than territorial, its members are exposed to a higher risk as early as at the beginning. I do not wish to be misunderstood – nobody wants to have victims. However, the ever-present fear of politics and public about the issue of victims should not have a negative impact on the implementation of national interests or military professional qualifications of SAF structures for operations in international operations and missions.

In the professional SAF structure, the ratio among individual categories of military personnel is still a clear indication of the legacy of the conscript army. Similarly, the target ratio of 1 : 2 : 5 between officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers laid down in planning documents has still not been attained. Achieving a more appropriate ratio is a highly demanding and long-lasting task, which must be maintained and sought by virtue of its significance.

The transition from the conscript to a career armed force led to a relatively quick downsizing of operational and military capabilities envisaged as part of the organization and mobilization development. Despite disbanding some of the commands, such as the military territorial commands³, the SAF command structure nevertheless remains oversized, not in terms of the number of commands but rather with regard to their manning levels and process duplication. Operational combat capabilities of the SAF career force are comparatively too moderate.

With the abolition of the conscript army, the flow of the cheap workforce of conscripts doing military service came to an end. It is hence unacceptable to engage expensive career soldiers, for instance military police, not only because of their salary, but also due to the investment into their education and training, for simple tasks, such as reception service instead of outsourcing cheaper services.

Loyalty in a modern career army does not necessarily mean absolute subordination to non-appellate authority. In accordance with new Military Doctrine (2006) principles,

³ *It becomes increasingly evident that their disbandment was not only illegal, but it also had a negative impact on maintaining SAF's integration into civilian environment, which was often discussed by the author of this article and others.*

the loyalty of subordinates to their superiors is reflected in the fulfilment of orders which implement the mission of the Slovenian Armed Forces, promote the interests of the Republic of Slovenia and strengthen its reputation in the international community. Loyalty is demonstrated through mutual trust and respect, as well as disciplined and accountable accomplishment of duties, and not through blind obedience and submissiveness, which is still not a widely applied practice in the career SAF.

An important issue for the career SAF is the inappropriate organization of the daily working time, which can be partly related to the conscript army and the status of military personnel equal to civil servants in public administration, but also to the unwillingness of the SAF to transform as an institution into a conventional career armed force with a more functional working rhythm, allowing more flexibility within the work code regulating public administration.

An ever-present challenge for career armies is still the status of career military personnel upon termination of their contract relationship for a limited period of time or completion of age limit for professional soldiers (NCOs and COs excluded), which is set at 45 years in the Republic of Slovenia. When addressing this challenge, an adequate balance must be sought among the interests of individuals, the military organization, the state and the society. Seeking appropriate consensus in the interim period is impaired due to past experiences of the conscript army, when professional military service contracts for (non-)commissioned officers were, as a rule, concluded for an unlimited period of time, and the employees were not confronted with the challenge of a second career and a new job in the civilian labour market at the half of their length of service. The market is (still) unfavourable to former career military personnel compared to some countries with long-standing experiences of a career army. As a balanced and sustainable development of a career army is inevitable necessitated by contract relationship for a limited period of time, the challenge should be given more attention and adequate social mechanisms should be provided to reduce uncertainty and potential dissatisfaction of career military personnel.

4 CHALLENGE NO. 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE CAREER ARMY

It is an undeniable fact that a career army can only be sufficient as a peacetime military instrument of the Republic of Slovenia. This, however, does not mean that it would be rational to supplement it with conceptual or even structural solutions following the very example of the former Territorial Defence Forces. We namely live in a new military strategic reality, which allows only reasonable use of former experiences and not their copies.

This on the other hand does not imply a non-appellate and uncritical belief in the all-mightiness of the concept of collective defence. It needs to be understood that collective defence by definition is just a synergy set of national defence. Each state should be capable of ensuring its own military security and contributing at the

same time to military security of allies and partners. Since in the event of extreme deterioration of security situation in the international community this objective cannot be met nationally solely with the help of career military, nations have to look for appropriate system and organization solutions facilitating the establishment of larger military capabilities in order to counter potentially bigger, intensified and long-lasting military threats.

Slovenia is therefore developing a concept of military strategic reserve which would enable reorganization and growth of peacetime defence and military capabilities into those adequate for wartime. In this regard, comprehensiveness of social endeavours plays a very important role and should be given particular attention due to the specific relationship between the career military and civilian society. The SAF still ranks high in public opinion polls on trust, although the delineation process of the career military from the civilian society is clearly perceived.⁴ The adverse effects are still not visible for the time being, but at time of ease and complacency as well as ignorance of this challenge a sudden tectonic slide of social acceptability and popularity of career military may occur with little chances for subsequent mending.

5 CHALLENGE NO. 4 – PROFESSIONALISATION IN SPITE OF AUSTERITY MEASURES⁵

The purpose and mission and tasks of the SAF, i.e. the ends of the defence system and the SAF, are clear. Since the means are, however, increasingly limited, we have for several years reminded about the need for deep reflection on the established ways of implementing national security and defence objectives of the state, and the search for new ones.

Owing to dynamic changes in the strategic environment, the defence sector reforms are a cyclic necessity, which has been this time additionally spurred and impaired at the same time due to limited means. In a few years' time, it will probably be impossible to achieve the planned level of defence expenditure and its adequate structure.

As a result of a recent transition to a career armed force, this represents an even more difficult situation for the Republic of Slovenia with the transition from a working-intensive form of conscript army to a financially intensive defence concept. This does not mean that the career aspect is in nominal terms costlier than the conscript system which is based on quantity, but its effectiveness relies more on armament

⁴ *The indicators of this process are as follows: through transition from the conscript to the career army, the system-based entry of the part of the population into the military through military service and participation in military exercises was suspended, the number of barracks was reduced, all military facilities had been removed from certain parts of the country (Bela krajina region, Koroška region, Soča valley region), military territorial commands (VTP) were disbanded, and the defence system, the SAF and civilian society activities (societies of particular importance for defence, logistic support of public events etc) received less support.*

⁵ *See also Kotnik, Igor (2012). Zmanjševanje finančnih sredstev za obrambo – Naloge enake, denarja manj. Obramba Magazine, February 2012, 4–8.*

and equipment quality and availability of financial means for development and investment (modernization). Without the necessary financial means, the majority of positive effects of transition to a career armed force will vanish over the mid-term, while over the long-term the underfunded career SAF may turn into a caricature.

Therefore, it is necessary to make a resolute deviation from the false impression that small countries can have everything the big ones have, be it in terms of the form and structure of defence capabilities. If such logic was partially acceptable during economic activity, it has become entirely unacceptable and irresponsible in the time of financial crisis and economic recession. The Republic of Slovenia should, similarly to NATO, develop generic planning security and defence scenarios and the associated requirements for defence capabilities of adequate quantity and quality in order to pursue and defend national interests and ambitions during peacetime, emergency situations and wartime, which would be based on strategic political and development-guiding documents and credible analysis of long-term external security threats posed to the Republic of Slovenia. In the next step, a comparison of the needed and available defence capabilities should be carried out to identify their surpluses and gaps, determine priorities and abandon unpromising capabilities allowing us to free the financial means required for the maintenance of the existing prioritized military capabilities and development of the urgently needed niche capabilities.

It should be understood that the time of austerity measures provides an excellent opportunity for investment into the organizational software, where along with various forms of education, training and exercises consideration should be particularly given to the improvement of psychosocial atmosphere and leadership as well as to the identification of innovative conceptual and doctrinal solutions which in spite of limited resources for the procurement of advanced armament and technical systems can function as multipliers of increased operational effectiveness of military capabilities.⁶

6 CHALLENGE NO. 5 – PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY OF SAF MEMBERS

Professionalism also involves assuming responsibility for one's own professional and social conduct. This includes professional, i.e. military in our case, and general social ethics and morale. According to Drinovec (2002), it is not only about the principle of doing good and not doing bad, but doing the right thing also for the duty and avoid doing wrong.

Formally, the area of professional military ethics in the Republic of Slovenia is adequately regulated in the Code of Military Ethics of the Slovenian Armed Forces (2009). The issue is, however, whether this ethics has already been fully internalised and whether it, consequently, as professional morale of SAF career soldiers fully

⁶ *At least minimum financial means should be provided for the procurement of test examples of key advanced armament and technical systems as well as for training of key personnel responsible for their analytical use, as we should not lose contact with the development in defence field, if we are unable to follow it adequately.*

meets ethical standards through their judgment and activity. I believe that in the Republic of Slovenia functional military professionalism is quite well developed, although there is still significantly more room for development in the field of ethical and moral military professionalism. Let me substantiate this opinion with two examples: professional values and professional integrity.

Drinovec (2002) points out insightfully that the mission of professions is not only to protect vulnerable population, but also vulnerable social values. According to Military doctrine (2006), the values of the Slovenian Armed Forces are rooted in general civilization values, the values of Slovenian society and specifics of the military activity character.

The fundamental common value shared by the members of the Slovenian Armed Forces is patriotism, on the basis of which the military also develops military values, such as honour, courage, loyalty, comradeship and commitment. It is probably generally agreed that these values are among the more vulnerable also in our society, hence the example set by military professionals in their protection and strengthening becomes even more important.

Although professions entail the required collective responsibility, even when pursuing and protecting vulnerable institutional and social values in the military organization, comradeship should not be in the service of concealing and protecting the individuals incapable of meeting of its ethical and moral standards, which brings us to the domain of professional integrity.

Rutledge (2011) believes that in terms of respecting moral principles people can be divided into two groups – those respecting and those ignoring the principles. The first group has developed a moral core composed of fundamental values. If these values represent a consistent whole in an individual, they are referred to as integrity. People, however, with no moral core, possess no personal integrity and behave in accordance with moral relativism. As already explained, definitions of professionalism commonly refer to the required existence of ethical codes, although it should not be ignored that the influence of ethical code is only as powerful in practice as it is powerful the moral foundation of an individual.

7 CHALLENGE NO. 6 – PROFESSIONALISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is often assumed that professionalism involves quality in a non-appellate manner, or, inversely, that poor-quality services are often considered unprofessional. Professionalism is aimed at developing and providing goods and services of special quality, which meet the key needs of people (Svetlik, 1999), in our case (military) security. When fulfilment of the key needs requires subordination of individual needs and interests, we are entering the field of altruism which is also one of the characteristics of professions.

The above, although in a more moderate form, is also summed up in the SAF Code of Military Ethics SV (2009), where SAF members ».../ adjust their personal interest and goals to the interest of their unit and the Slovenian Armed Forces« In terms of pursuing individual interest goals, this is by all means a highly interesting dynamics which cannot be clearly established in each case. Depending on the character of individual's interests and goals, it can involve subordination, adjustment or just coordination, yet it is, by all means, unacceptable and wrong to give individual and narrow group interests and goals greater preference over general collective, institutional, state and national interests. The establishment level of the latter principle within the SAF is a matter of subjective consideration, although some objective indicators, such as the absenteeism level, particularly during prolonged field exercises, imply quite some development potential in this area.

Managing the conflict of interest represents one of the more complex professional development areas, since through the professionalization process clients increasingly regard professional expertise and services as unquestionable, thus justifying the expectations and demands of the representatives of a specific profession for a more advantageous social position. At this point specifically, maturity and social responsibility of a profession becomes evident, at the same time raising the question of its willingness to be exposed to various forms of external and internal control in as transparent and unforced manner as possible.

8 CHALLENGE NO. 7 – EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONTROL OF MILITARY PROFESSION

According to Drinovec (2002), professions are beyond the limit of necessity inclined to exploit the monopoly of maximizing economic and other interests of their members, potentially leading to decline or weakening of professionalism as a result of omitting control within the profession.

Occupations are typically controlled externally, while professions are at the same also exposed to internal control. In case of military profession, the external control is two-fold – the control of the state is performed through various institutionalized mechanisms, and the social control through public opinion. One of the main priorities of the military profession is, therefore, to maintain appropriate relations both with the political state and civilian society, where confidence of the state and society in military profession is of fundamental importance.

Such confidence depends primarily on the appropriacy of military profession activity and effectiveness of fulfilment of functional and social imperative, which demands from the military organization to develop and apply appropriate self-regulatory mechanisms of internal control. This should also involve adequate disciplinary and improvement mechanisms, and in the extreme case also the exclusion of those members who have failed to meet or respect professional standards.

The key challenge is to ensure appropriate synchronization of external and internal control mechanisms and guidance for a career army as being a highly complex social structure in its character. If external control is too strong, problems may arise as a result of impaired professional autonomy, or in the opposite case, a career army may become a highly unpredictable and unmanageable social structure. It can be concluded that internal military professional control and SAF guidance are still not fully developed in terms of function and structure, and the commanders still lack an appropriate set of tools of positive and negative sanctions to help them efficiently manage the career army.⁷

9 CHALLENGE NO. 8 – PROFESSIONALISATION THROUGH CONTINUING EDUCATION

Military profession, or increasingly the profession of arms, has been exposed to a continual adjustment and modification need, which stems from the changing political security, technological, military strategic, doctrinal and social determinants of contemporary world. Svetlik (1999) believes that professions have to develop appropriate mechanisms of internal adjustment to respond to changes in the environment, with those of education bearing the major importance.

Owing to the speed and scope of changes faced by professions, Svetlik argues (1999) that it is increasingly impossible and unreasonable to train new members for the accomplishment of concrete professional tasks during their initial training. He suggests instead to focus the initial training on general and widely applicable qualifications and knowledge providing a solid basis for subsequent continuous adjustments to the changing professional work.

Maybe some would oppose such a view, which however does not change the fact that the ability for efficient performance of professional work demands from all military personnel to participate in continuing education. It is essential to understand and accept that continuing education is no longer an advantage for officers and non-commissioned officers, but rather a necessity for soldiers as well. In the long run, the mere training and exercises will not, without appropriate education, equip them satisfactorily with the competences needed for task accomplishment in the increasingly complex environment sensitive to mistakes. A leap in philosophy cannot be immediate, but rather demands a gradual and comprehensive approach, where a personal professional example of the superiors and colleagues will be supplemented through formalized educational topics.

⁷ *The only SAF disciplinary body is the Chief of the General Staff, who may transfer his authority to commanders, originally without this power. In contrast to the practice of the majority of career armies, SAF commanders cannot order custody for soldiers and also have more limitations in terms of remuneration than their international counterparts.*

10 CHALLENGE NO. 9 – PROFESSIONALISATION AS THE PATH WITHOUT END

The project group in charge of the project *Transition to Professional Armed Forces Complemented with Contractual Reserve* (PROVOJ) was established in May 2002⁸ with the task of launching the project no later than in February 2003. In accordance with the final report of the project PROVOJ (2009: 15), the SAF professionalization was aimed at fully addressing the issues of the emerging career army in the following 17 areas of sub-projects:

- PP 1 and 2: Project management and management plan,
- PP 3: Recruitment measures,
- PP 4: Manning of the Slovenian Armed Forces,
- PP 5: Military service – retention and dismissal,
- PP 6: Care for the welfare of SAF members,
- PP 7: Dismissal of SAF members from military service,
- PP 8: Education and training,
- PP 9: Equipping with weapons and military equipment,
- PP 10: Further adjustments of legislation,
- PP 11: Infrastructure adjustments,
- PP 12: Funding,
- PP 13: Formal and legal advancement of military professions,
- PP 14: Cooperation with other ministries,
- PP 15: Slovenian Armed Forces and civilian environment,
- PP 16: Leadership,
- PP 17: Cooperation with economic sector.

Given the previous reasonable arguments of describing professionalization as a path and not as a goal, it may be agreed with the conclusion that it is a unique project (Final project report, 2009: 18, 23), yet not at all with a statement that it is a timely limited process. Moreover, the project, which was initially planned for the period up to the end of 2010, was officially concluded already at the end of 2007 without reaching some of the major project goals. The Final project report (2009: 42–90) lists the following working packages (ID) and task (N) or object (PR) goals:

- PR 3.19: Satisfied SAF members⁹;
- N 4.2: Recruitment and selection of candidates will be carried out in the manner to achieve the end states of the manning level of permanent and reserve SAF structures;
- N 4.7: Units manned with contract reservists will be manned with former active duty members;

⁸ Document-no. 802-00-8/2002-1, dated 28. 5. 2002.

⁹ Although the Service in the Slovenian Armed Forces Act addresses some of the negative trends, notably salary stagnation and welfare care, the following challenges still remain unresolved: employment relationship for a limited period of time, distance from work, gap between expectations and reality (e.g. initial information and subsequent workload, prolonged absenteeism etc.) and negative trends of labour market in terms of increased competitive offer of more attractive or safer jobs (Final report PROVOJ, 2009: 43). The latter is less evident during the period of austerity measures and economic recession, while all other trends are still topical.

- N 5.20, PR 5.19: Agreements on employment of former SAF members will be concluded with other ministries and major employers;
- PR 5.6: Conditions will be established to address the lack of appropriate personnel in SAF units and commands;
- PR 5.18: The organization of professions of former SAF members will be established;
- ID 651: Medical care will be provided;
- N 6.3, PR 6.3: The self-help system for family members will be introduced;
- N 6.6, PR 6.5: In accordance with resources, basic medical care will also be provided for family members of SAF members as part of the military medical service;
- PR 8.5: The acquired rights for issuing official deeds, certificates of education and qualification will be treated equally as those of related civilian professions;
- PR 8.6: Education and qualifications acquired during education and training in the SAF can be utilized for jobs upon the termination of employment in the SAF;
- N 11.7: Priority in adjustments or construction of housing units will be given to single members;
- ID 378: Educational programmes for standard professional knowledge and skills will be drafted and verified;
- PR 13.5: Arrangements will be made for the issuance of certificates and licences to all SAF members.

The Final project report (2009: 47) also states that the implemented task and object goals of the project have not been yet introduced into life and work of the constituent units of the Ministry of Defence and the SAF, or at least not sufficiently enough.

All of the above – the early completion, unsuccessful implementation of a significant number of major task and object goals as well as conclusions on incomplete implementation of some PROVOJ results in practice – leads us to consider the necessity of the project continuation, which is rather cautiously and secretly, yet undoubtedly, also indicated on page 27 of the Final project report. In the table presenting the final stage of the PROVOJ project, the *Final report PROVOJ* is followed by another two, *Continuation of professionalization programmes* and *PROVOJ II*. As specific areas of professionalization requiring further or continued attention, there was an explicit mention of salaries, infrastructure, family, welfare, leadership, relations, adjustments of legislation and SAF promotion, which, based on daily experiences, could be at least expanded with the career path, care for welfare of members, adjustments of legislation, cooperation with ministries¹⁰, complete system of criteria and programmes for selection and education and training in military leadership¹¹ and relations with civilian environment¹².

¹⁰ Following the example of some other countries with career armies, it would be at least sensible to seek agreement with other ministries and introduce practice, whereby a minimum of one completed contract period in the role of professional soldier would be the required career step for employment in some other state institutions or professions.

¹¹ Example: A team-department for military leadership development is established, whose formation table and size of personnel, however, does not facilitate complete implementation of the tasks set. (Final project report, 2009: 93)

¹² This is particularly important in the context of, first, limitations of the role of military territorial commands and, subsequently, their disbandment as well as social expectations and the increasing pressure on reducing defence expenditure.

The Final project report becomes more explicit about the need to continue the process of professionalization in the SAF on page 97: »We believe that SAF professionalization is a process requiring the further goal-orientation and implementation through all necessary projects« In the continuation of the final report, emphasis is laid upon the argument that professionalization mind-set is still inadequately introduced into the work of the Ministry of Defence and the SAF General Staff, necessitating the continuation of project work in order to achieve a proper perception and understanding of career military and military professionalism in all SAF structures and other environments which influence the status and functioning of the military organization.

This involves in particular the aspect of so-called functional professionalization¹³ or the development and introduction of an appropriate way of thinking, planning and functioning, which, due to the inertia of human mind, represents one of the major challenges of any large-scale and profound system-wide changes, what transition to a career army and professionalization definitely is. This aspect of professionalization is especially important during this period of restricted defence funds, as the changed way of thinking commonly requires only little resources compared to its general positive effects.

Conclusion A lot has been achieved along the twenty-year-long path from the Territorial Defence Forces, through the conscript to the career SAF and its professionalization, but the time has not come yet to rest on our laurels.

As any other social process, professionalization of a military organization is an oscillation. It should, therefore, be carefully controlled and guided as well as ensured that the internal oscillation is as little as possible and that the main activity despite occasional problems and stops stays predominantly positive.

At the beginning of the third decade of our independent state it is time to re-evaluate whether the development of defence and military capabilities has indeed reached the expected stage given the normative, development-guiding and planning documents as well as military-strategic and social reality. We should be honest in explaining why we maybe somewhere else, not to judge about the past, but rather to prevent repetition of mistakes in the future. Encouraged by the negative impact of economic recession and financial crisis reflected notably in the reduction of financial means for defence needs of the state, we have to be prepared to take decisive, yet prudent action.

Most likely we have found ourselves at the point when at least for some time we will have to get used to the idea of a less ambitious vision of the future SAF development in terms of its modernization and financial means. At the same time, all of its positive potential which has been over ignored in the past needs to be skilfully activated.

¹³ The PROVOJ project took into account and specifically emphasized the difference between functional and structural professionalisation, which enables the creation of adequate personnel, materiel and organizational-structural base of a military organization.

The potential should be directed towards a determined quest for ways and methods, tolerant to minor mistakes and time- and circumstance-adequate, for accomplishing mission and tasks of the SAF.

In this context, professionalization of career military should involve the maintenance of appropriate vigilance and commitment, before finally yielding in to some inconsistencies and irregularities pointed out in the article, and control of some of the previously less successful aspects of this process and their consequences.

The Slovenian Armed Forces represent the operational core of Slovenia's defence system. Based on full social efforts, appropriate conditions for the further development of military professionalism should be established. The foreground of these endeavours, however, should be reserved for all those professionally dealing with defence matters, in particular the current and future SAF members, united and motivated by the motto: »The SAF and me – together on the way to professional excellence!«¹⁴

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¹⁴ *The text is an adaptation of Korez's (2012) highly attractive proposal of a new SAF motto: »The SAF through professional excellence and stability towards a new decade.« The initial proposal was a little shortened and simplified, with stability being a necessary element of professionalism. Moreover, the modified motto involves a development aspect, as a path leading to a goal, at the same time through »me« incorporating the idea of personal involvement and responsibility. As such, the motto follows the argument of Korez (2012) even closer than the original one, and it functions on two levels: as a recognition of all of the employed staff for co-creating professional excellence, and as encouragement to those contemplating to join the SAF on its way towards excellence.*